

The Anatomy of a Gossip

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Proverbs 20:19 “A gossip goes around telling secrets, so don’t hang around with chatterers.” (NLT)

Just exactly what is gossip? We read at Dictionary.com that gossip is: “idle talk or rumor, especially about the personal or private affairs of others” and “to talk idly, especially about the affairs of others; go about tattling.”

Unfortunately, many Believers in the church today don’t think twice about gossiping about others; in fact, some take pleasure in it while others engage in it without realizing that they’re doing it. Regardless of the circumstance in which gossip is being engaged in, it’s always wrong to gossip. There is never – for any reason – a justification for sharing negative private details about another person’s life. Ever.

In Proverbs 18:8 we read, “The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.” (ESV)

Gossip “goes down into the inner parts of the body”. This passage of Scripture paints a picture like that of eating food. Gossips live on a diet of gossip; they eat, drink and sleep gossip. They make it their duty to read the latest headlines on the latest minister to fall into sin; they have no problem reading about the sins of others and in fact defend the publishing of sinful details concerning other individuals.

Take for example the recent “Christian” media headlines concerning Pastor Saeed Abedini. His wife, Sister Naghmeh Abedini, has come out and accused him – quite publicly – of spousal abuse and addiction to pornography (click [here](#) for my take on her engaging in this behavior). The details of their separation (1) should not have been made public and (2) Naghmeh Abedini should not have been the one to announce the separation. There are various ways that the information could have been handled; however, it was handled in a manner which is filled with gossip. The gossiper will justify the gossip by stating, “It would have been leaked anyway!”, not caring or realizing that it’s still gossip to share private negative details about another individual. That, after all, is the very definition of gossip.

Let’s take another example. What do you think of – if you’re 40 years old or over – when the name Jimmy Swaggart comes up? Do you think of millions of lost

souls won to Christ or do you think of sexual immorality? You know the answer. It's a sinful thing that so called Christian media has done to this Man of God. The fact that anyone can now Google Mr. Swaggart and then deliberately click on links that talk about his sins is repulsive. These are supposed to be Christians! Jimmy Swaggart's past sins are brought up by gossiping "Christians" over and over and over and over; what a shame! To speak such filth - gossip! - is vile and horrendous. I'm astounded that one can engage in such behavior and remain blind to what they're doing and to what spirit is influencing them.

Gossip is a filthy, vile, wicked and abominable sin; no one should be partaking in it. Christians who justify their love for gossip will say things such as, "The truth needs to be told!" but really, it doesn't.. well, not to them as it's none of their business. Truth must be revealed in private and to those within a specific circle. If it's a public figure, it must be done in a way that doesn't reveal the offense to those not involved. Period. If you and I are not part of the issue, it's none of our business.

No; not all sharing of information is gossip; there is a time, place and method which Scripture gives to you and I concerning the revealing of negative yet truthful information concerning another individual. Read now the words of Jesus Christ concerning this:

Matthew 18:15-17 "If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won't accept the church's decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector."

Notice; the media isn't involved; the community at large isn't involved. Who's involved? The offended, the offender and those who can offer practical help within the local church to which both parties belong. All others are excluded. You aren't involved; I'm not involved. Thus, whatever sin is committed against another is not our business; it's between them, the local church and the proper authorities if such a situation calls for it. Now some will take issue with that, feeling it's their "right" to know the private affairs of others. These people are gossips.

Shame on so-called Christian media outlets such as Charisma News, Christianity Today and others who publish the sins of Men and Women of God. The stain of what Christian media and the Assemblies of God did to Jimmy Swaggart... they'll give an account to God for it. They'll give an account for publishing the sins of

Pastor Saeed Abedini. In fact, they'll give an account for all of the Men and Women of God they felt compelled to gossip about, masking it in "Christian concern".

I think of a certain Man of God of international repute who, in a message, spoke of a certain situation which was deeply troubling concerning another minister; however, in the message he gave no names; he simply told a story to illustrate a point. This Man of God (who I will leave unnamed in this article) showed great integrity in this. He could have shouted the name ... but he chose not to. I applaud such Men of God.

Proverbs 17:4 "Wrongdoers eagerly listen to gossip; liars pay close attention to slander." (NLT)

The Word of God teaches us that those who take the time to listen to gossip are wrongdoers. Remember, gossip is the sharing of truthful yet negative information concerning others whom we have no business knowing of in such a way. Simply put, it's wrong to gossip, regardless of one's personal justifications for it. While a gossip will indeed justify his or her gossip, the Scriptures testify against such justifications.

In James 4:11 we read, "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge."

"But Dan! What so and so did is true!".

It may be that the gossiper is correct but I ask: "Is it their business? Are they in relationship with the one they're gossiping about?" If so, then they have all the more reason to cover and protect the brother or sister; not exploit them. If not, they certainly have absolutely no business speaking evil of another. The Scripture is clear: Gossipers are going to give an account.

In 1 Timothy 5:13 we read, "And if they are on the list, they will learn to be lazy and will spend their time gossiping from house to house, meddling in other people's business and talking about things they shouldn't." (NLT)

Notice that gossipers go from "house to house"; they meddle in other people's business and talk about things that they shouldn't. A gossip goes from house to house - or from one website to another - meddling in other people's business as though they're called by God to let people know "the truth". One thing is certain; gossips certainly aren't called by God to do what they're doing.

"But Dan! They need to be held accountable!"

Yes, they do! That's the job of Matthew 18. In fact, let's look at our next Scripture passage:

In Proverbs 17:9 we read "Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends." (ESV)

Notice that we're to cover an offence; not repeat it. In repeating the offence of another, we separate people into two camps: Those who agree and those who disagree. This is a spirit of division. Gossipers carry a divisive spirit and division is a work of the flesh and those who partake in it will not inherit God's Kingdom:

Galatians 5:19-21 "When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God."

In 1 Thessalonians 4:11 we read, "Make it your goal to live a quiet life, minding your own business and working with your hands, just as we instructed you before." (NLT)

Notice the words, "minding your own business". Paul was clearly instructing the church in Thessalonica not to meddle in other people's business. It's glaringly obvious. Living a quiet life doesn't include chattering about everyone else's sins and exposing them; in fact, as we have already seen in Proverbs 17:9, those who cover an offence are the ones who truly seek love while those who repeat another person's sins are full of division, no matter how much they speak of unity, love, grace and mercy. Let us not be fooled by the smiley face of a gossip; they carry a very bitter spirit within them and they seek out opportunities to meddle in other people's business.

The Corinthians, who moved powerfully in the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and believed themselves to be spiritual, were in fact very carnal! They truly believed themselves to be the on-fire Pentecostals of the day, so to speak, yet look at what Paul the Apostle states in 2 Corinthians 12:20

"For I am afraid that when I come I won't like what I find, and you won't like my response. I am afraid that I will find quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorderly behavior." (NLT)

That's a pretty big list! Yet, here the Corinthians are, speaking in tongues, prophesying, working miracles... and they're full of carnality! I wonder what would have happened if it wasn't the Apostle Paul who went to correct them; what if he sent a no-name delegate to bring correction to the Corinthians? Would

they have received the delegate? Probably not as they were filled with arrogance.

As it was true with the Corinthians, so the same is true today. Gossipers justify their wicked behavior and cannot be corrected; they feel it their duty to gossip and there's nothing I nor you can do about it. It's unfortunate, yet it's a reality. Gossipers become angered when correction comes to them; they hate when their gossip is exposed and when it is, they'll justify their gossip to no end. There are some who simply take pleasure in hearing of another man or woman's sins; they claim it's unloving to remain silent to outsiders. I contend that the most unloving thing to do is to rise above the Biblical command to refrain from gossip and continue justifying one's pleasure for repeating matters that they have no business repeating. These blinded souls can't see and they can't hear; they've become deaf to the correction of the Word because of their lust to meddle into the lives of others.

In Proverbs 10:19 we read that "Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut." (NLT)

Gossipers talk too much. As a result, they can't hear anyone else! Their talk consists of what they read online and how "so and so" did "this and that". They have no shame in exposing others; they're talkers. They just can't cover an offence; they have excuse after excuse as to why "this needs to come out"; they completely ignore the Word on gossip and plunge head first into the sin of being a chatterbox.

In 1 Peter 4:15 we're told: "If you suffer, however, it must not be for murder, stealing, making trouble, or prying into other people's affairs." (NLT)

As Believers, we're not to be known as people who "pry into other people's business". Period. No exceptions here. It's as plain as day. A gossip doesn't think twice about prying into other people's business via speaking of their sins and shortcomings.

Psalm 19:14 "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."

In John 8:4-11 we read, " they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went

away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

Notice that this woman was literally just caught in the act of adultery. She had not plead for her life, for forgiveness or anything else. The wicked Pharisees spoke of her sin and called for her death. How did Jesus respond? He removed her condemnation and called her to live a life of sexual purity for that moment on.

I know for certain that while gossips go about verbally stoning others, they themselves would never want their own sins published in a magazine. Gossips constantly call for the verbal stoning of those they feel "need to be exposed". Let us never be on the side of the Pharisees who seek to use the Law of God to destroy others, twisting the Scripture in an effort to justify their own warped thinking. Let us never be the types who read of others' sins online and/or in print and then repeat it to others. Gossips do have not the heart of God but rather are carnal, fleshly and sold to self desire. They may know the Scriptures; they may have grown up in church; they may have the biggest and brightest smiles on their faces... but they're void of Biblical love and compassion. Don't be taken in by their smooth talk. The very story as recorded in John 8 is a rebuke to the gossiper's lust for gossip and their anger at those who commit sin.

Was Jesus angry? Did Jesus even slightly rebuke this woman? No. He forgave her, cleansed her and sanctified her for holiness. Did He ever mention her sins to anyone, at any time? No. The gossiper, however, will always speak of others' sins. They don't follow the example of Jesus but rather follow their own fleshly desire to destroy others through their words. Gossips read things about people in print and online, feeling no shame in clicking on links to websites that speak evil of others. It is doubtful that a gossiper will repent; in fact, a gossip who reads this very article will become upset, angry and mask it in, "You're protecting sinners!".

Yes, I'm protecting sinners; just as Jesus did, offering them a new way of living without needing to shame them.